

13
1863
THE
D U T Y
O F
CHRISTIANS,

With Respect to
Human INTERPRETATIONS,
AND
DECISIONS,

W H E N
Propos'd to be Believed and Submitted
to by Them, as Necessary Parts of
the Christian Religion.

M^r. By a Clergyman in the Country. *Bolton*
of People's Church

*Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master even Christ,
and all ye are Brethren, Matth. xxij. 8.*

L O N D O N,
Printed for William Churchill, at the Black-Swan in
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THE
DUTY
OF
CHRISTIANS

HUMAN INTERESTS
AND
DECISIONS

WHEN
PROPOSED TO BE FOLLOWED AND SUPPORTED
BY A PEOPLE AS PRESENTLY PART OF
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

By a Christian in the County of York

It is not necessary to state, for our purpose, that the
author is a member of the Church of England.

LONDON
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Fleet Street, near St. Dunstons Church

ERRATA.

PAGE 13. Line 6. Read *to bis*. p. 18. l. 2. r. *declare's*. p. 20. l. 29. r. *Himself*. Ibid. l. 30. after *can*. r. *not*. Ibid. l. 31. for *set*. r. *Assent*. p. 22. l. 13. r. *Word*. p. 23. l. 8. r. *Evidence*. p. 24. l. 13. r. *a Power*. p. 29. l. 1. after *make*. r. *it*. p. 30. l. 21. del. *all*. p. 34. l. 16. r. *except*.

THE
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OF
CHRISTIANS
IN
HUMAN INTERRELATIONS

ERRATA

Page 1. Line 6. Read: "p. 12.1"
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THE
DUTY
OF
CHRISTIANS
IN
HUMAN INTERRELATIONS

THE Duty of Christians,

With Respect to

Human INTERPRETATIONS,

AND

DECISIONS, &c.

Section I. **T**HAT the Lord Jesus Christ,
*the Author and Finisher of
every Christian's Faith, and
the Author of Eternal Salva-
tion unto all them that obey*

*him, after he had Finished the whole Work he
came into this World about, Ascended into
Heaven, and sent, according to his Promises, the
Comforter, the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, to his
Apostles, to bring to their remembrance all things,
whatsoever he had said unto them, and to teach them
all things, and guide them into all truth, which
should be Necessary or Expedient for his Disci-
ples and Subjects to be acquainted with, in or-
der to their regular Conduct, and making sure
their own Eternal Salvation; and to abide with
them for ever, by accompanying that Revelation
they should receive from Him, with his power-*

ful and gracious Influence, to the making it effectual unto People for the ends, for which it was intended, in all Generations to the end of the World ; That this Revelation of the Mind and Will of God, given by the Holy Ghost unto the Apostles, was by his Assistance left by them, for perpetual Use, more especially of Christians, and is contained in the Books of the New Testament, are Truths of very great Importance. Those who profess themselves Protestants, do not pretend to have any doubt concerning them.

§. II. It must then be the certain Duty of Christians, to have a very high Esteem of this Revelation, and to make the New Testament their principal Study. They ought to have Recourse to it, with great Seriousness, as to all things which can concern them as Christians, which ought to affect their Consciences, and which respect their Eternal Salvation. They are not on any account, to be determined as to any of these Matters, by any thing, but what, upon impartial Examination, they find is laid down, is taught, is delivered in the New Testament, where the Apostles, by the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, have given a full Account of that Revelation of the Mind of God, they received from Him, sent unto them by the Lord Jesus, to instruct them in all things, Christians, as such, can be concerned to know or believe in order to their Spiritual and Eternal Welfare, 'till he shall come again, to judge them according to, or by, this Revelation.

§. III. This (the New Testament) is the unerring and infallible Rule by which they are to govern

govern themselves in every thing that concerns them as Christians. Every Christian ought to make it his most serious Care and Business to learn from it, his Duty in every particular, both as to Faith, Worship, and Practice. This is the sole Rule a Christian ought to govern himself by, in every thing that pertains to him as a Christian. He must make it his care to correct and avoid Mistakes and Errors in Judgment, by comparing Notions, Opinions, and Doctrines with this Rule, and judging of them as impartially as he can by it. And as to Faults and Sins in Heart, and Practice, he must make it his Business to amend them, by conforming his Heart and Practices, as exactly as he is able, to what he finds commanded and ordered in this Revelation. This should be his aim, this should be his endeavour.

§. IV. He must therefore read, diligently and seriously attend to, what is taught in the New Testament; he must honestly make use of the means afforded him, in order to his obtaining a rational Satisfaction, that he understands aright, what He receives from thence; and he must pray heartily for the help of the Holy Spirit, to make his sincere Endeavours successful, to his understanding what the Will of his Lord is, depending on the Encouragement his Lord has given them, who do in Sincerity take this Course, to expect the help of the Spirit. *How much more shall your heavenly father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?* He ought seriously and faithfully to employ his Rational Powers and Faculties, and use all the means he can obtain, to acquire the Knowledge of his Lord's Will, as to what concerns him to know of it,
that

that he may be able to give a reason, why he believes that Sense in which he understands any part of this Revelation, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there. He ought not to entertain any Sense, as the meaning of the Holy Ghost, for the justifying of himself in believing it to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, he cannot alledge any thing, but that such a *Man, or Number of Men*, perhaps of great Name, and pompous Character, have declared That that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost. 'Till He can find out a better Reason than that, for his believing any particular Sense, to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost in that part of his Revelation, He may safely conclude, that part of the New Testament is at present out of his reach, and that he is under no Obligation as yet, to believe any thing more concerning it, but that in general it contains part of the mind of his Lord, but what, in particular, He is not concerned to believe, nor can be, 'till he shall obtain more Light than yet he has, and which he will honestly endeavour to obtain.

§. V. No Christian ought to believe any Sense in particular, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, without perceiving some degree of Rational Evidence, that it was his meaning. The Testimony of many creditable Persons concerning a Matter of Fact, that has happened within the Cognizance of their *Senses*, renders that Matter of Fact credible to others. But One, or one Thousand (for there is no difference in the case) Persons, affirming the Truth of a Proposition, the Proof of which, entirely depends on Rational Evidence, is no degree of Rational Evidence that it is true. And what is not Rational

tional Evidence, will never become, or grow into Rational Evidence, by Multiplication. A Christian is not to believe a particular Sense, of any part of the New Testament was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there, unless he perceive Rational Evidence to perswade or oblige him to believe That that particular Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there; for if he were, his being a Christian would make him cease to be a Man, whereas Christianity aims at, and tends to help, and advance People's Reason, to make them more and more Rational in all Respects, but especially in what respects their everlasting Welfare. He is therefore obliged not to submit his Faith, or Practice, in any thing, the Revelation given by the Holy Ghost to the Apostles doth treat of, to the mere Interpretation, or pretended Authority of any Man, or Body of Men; because the bare saying of any Man, or Number of Men, let his, or their Character be what it will in the World, doth not amount to the least Degree of probability, that what He, or They do say was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, was so.

§. VI. Their Character may induce to think it probable, they may perceive Evidence which doth oblige them to believe that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, which they say was his meaning. But their declaring That that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, affords not the least degree of Evidence to others, That that was his meaning. But the least degree of probable Evidence that another Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, is one sort of Rational Evidence, and must in Reason determine him who perceives it, to believe That
that

that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost; in opposition to the bare saying of one Man, or even of the greatest Assembly of Men that ever was in the World, That another Sense was his *Meaning*. That one Man, or greater Number of Men, may perceive stronger Evidence, than that just named, to justify them in believing, that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, which they affirm and decree was so. But as long as they conceal their Reasons, from others, and only publish that such a Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, the least degree of Evidence perceived for another Sense, is of greater weight, and ought to determine him who perceives it, rather than their bare Assertion. For in this case, the difference is plainly this, *Some Evidence*, and *no Evidence at all*. And is it not clear then, which ought to oblige Assent?

§. VII. In a numerous Assembly professedly met to agree, what was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, in some part of that Revelation delivered by the Apostles from Him, there may be many very learned, judicious, and pious Men, and there may be a much greater Number who are not so. And if the Decision must be made by the greatest Number of Votes, it will be something wonderful, if those who have the weakest Minds, and worst Hearts, being considerably more than the other, do not carry the Determination their own way, though the Reasons on the other side were ever so strong. It must be expected that in such case, the greater Number will determine for that Sense, they are willing should have been the meaning of the Holy Ghost; especially if they apprehend that their own Interest will be served by having that Sense

Sense decreed. There have been some Instances, and may be, of Persons who have worn a very fair and promising Character for some time, whom the Power of worldly Interest, or something not very Foreign from it, hath so much Byassed, they have waved Rational Evidence, rather than not serve a Turn. But when did a weak and corrupt Majority, sacrifice their own, and their Parties dear Interest, purely to do Justice to the strength of Rational Evidence? There can be no doubt, that the greatest Numbers in some Ecclesiastical Assemblies, instead of serving the Interest of Truth, have had something else principally in view.

§. VIII. But suppose the best, That Decisions are grounded on very weighty Reasons and Arguments, yet as long as the Decisions only are published, and not the Reasons which induced them to agree on them, those Reasons, are Reasons only to themselves, they cannot be of any weight, they cannot enlighten, convince, operate on, and satisfy those who are ignorant of them. Be they ever so many who concur in declaring that such a Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, and be the Arguments ever so pertinent, which prevail with them to believe that Sense; their bare concurrent declaring that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, gives no Rational Satisfaction to any Man, that it was so, nor can they have Authority from Christ to oblige any of his Subjects, to believe that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, merely because they agree to say it was. Every Man is obliged to assent to the Truth of a Proposition, in Proportion to the degrees of Evidence he perceives of its being true. This must be allowed;

or the necessary and unavoidable consequence will be, That a Man cannot be obliged to assent to the Truth of any Proposition whatsoever. What the Assembly decrees to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, may be his meaning, but it is not their Decree that makes it so, nor does their Decree prove it was his meaning. Let their Decree really contain the meaning of the Holy Ghost, their bare Assertion that it does so, is no Proof at all that it does contain the meaning of the Holy Ghost. But the lowest Degree of Probability perceived that another Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, is one sort of Evidence, one degree of Proof, That that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, and he who perceives that, and only that degree of Evidence, as to the meaning of the Holy Ghost, and for that Sense alone, must believe, That that Sense was his meaning, 'till he perceives the same, or a greater degree of Evidence, that another Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, otherwise he will fail of governing himself, as a good Christian ought to govern himself.

§. IX. If any Number of Men agree to say such a Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, in any part of the New Testament, without perceiving any Evidence that it was so, or in Contradiction to Evidence that his meaning was otherwise, their declaring the Sense they agree on, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, cannot oblige a Christian to believe it was the meaning of the Holy Ghost. For they being under no Obligation to believe it themselves, but indeed, not to believe it, their saying, That that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, which they know

know they are not obliged to believe was so; can be no evidence to another, that what they say, is true, nor lay an indispensable Obligation on Christ's Subjects to believe it was the meaning of the Holy Ghost. Yet thus it must be, if *Decision-makers* in Religion, have that Absolute Power and Authority some pretend to. For according to them, Christians are indispensably obliged to submit and believe. They must believe that to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, which the Deciders say is so, tho' the Deciders themselves do know, that in what they say, They do lye against the Holy Ghost. Lord! Whither are Bad Men endeavouring to hurry the Populace! Whether Decisions be true, or false, there is no difference, as to Christians, if Men have an Absolute Authority to determine for them, and they are under an Indispensable Obligation to submit, and believe.

§. X. Those who Assemble, may perceive stronger Evidence that one certain Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, than they perceive for any other Sense, and in believing that to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, they will act, as becomes good Christians. But then it must still be remembred, that their bare saying that Sense, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, does not convey to others, the Evidence they perceived, or any Evidence of it at all, and therefore they cannot reasonably expect others should believe it, meerly on their Word. For should others do so, they would not act, as they themselves thought they ought to act, to acquit themselves as good Christians. That is, They would not have believed that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, if they had

perceived greater degrees of Evidence that another Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, than they perceived for that being his meaning, but did fix upon, and believe that Sense to be his meaning, purely because they perceived greater Evidence that that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, than they perceived that any other Sense was his meaning. Now, if their acting as became good Christians did consist in that, other Christians would not act as good Christians should, if they should believe that to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, which they say is his meaning, barely upon their saying it, without perceiving any Evidence that it was his meaning, or in contradiction to some degree of Evidence that another Sense was his meaning. One would think, They would not have it suppos'd, they are of Opinion that none ought to act like good Christians but themselves. If they in judging for themselves, would not have believed, what they declare was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, to have been his meaning, if they had not perceived, what they apprehended to be such Evidence that it was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, as over weighed what they perceived on the behalf of any other Sense, why should not others take the same method? They can no more judge for others, than others can for them. And if they took the course which became good Christians, must not others do so too? And not assent to the truth of Propositions, without, or in contradiction to Evidence, but in proportion to the degrees of Evidence they do perceive?

§. XI. If any Man hath Authority to determine what was the meaning of the Holy Ghost in any parts of the New Testament, so as indispensably to oblige Christians, in order to their acceptance with God, and to their own Eternal Salvation, to submit their Faith to their Determinations, and purely upon his Word, to believe those Determinations to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, He must have that Authority, by vertue of some Office, in which He is vested, *e. g.* That of a Bishop. If so, then every Bishop, has that Authority. And if one Bishop determine's that such a Sense, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost in such a part of the New Testament, that Determination being published by him, will indispensably oblige every Christian (who shall know He hath made that Determination) to believe that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, and that in order to his having an interest in the Favour of God, and to his own Eternal Salvation. For if his Determination obligeth any one Christian in that manner, it must oblige every Christian in the like manner, who knows he hath made that Determination. And must not that Determination oblige in the same manner, every other Bishop who is a Christian, as such, tho' not as a Bishop? If the Authority necessarily result from, or is inseparable from the Office, the Determination, of one Bishop by vertue of his Office, is every jot as valid, and as certainly obligatory, as the Determination of twenty thousand Bishops can be. No Obligation can be more than *Indispensable*. And all the Bishops in the World, have no greater Power

Power or Authority as Bishops, than any one Bishop has.

§. XII. The Office of a Christian Bishop is undoubtedly very important, it is a very good *Work*, and very greatly to be Respected and Honoured. And I think it is very evident, that none have so vilified and abused the most Learned, and Pious Men, when Bishops, as those who have made the mightiest noise in *pretending* to magnify Episcopacy. These People have given abundant proof, that they have a great dislike to Piety, and Reason, and no very good affection to Learning. When these *Qualifications* are Bright and Shining in Bishops, then they have no Patience at all, but are perfectly like People possess'd. They talk as if Bishops had all Power, but then they must exercise it just according to their Humours. They must judge and act as they would have them, and then they'll swear, Bishops have right to judge for, and condemn all others. This is certain, Bishops are very seldom of the same mind in every thing. And if they happen to make inconsistent and contradictory Determinations (for whatever Power belongs to the Office, the Office doth not make all that are vested with it, to agree in every thing) the Difficulties may be great, which will arise from the Impossibility of Christians submitting their Faith to contradictory Determinations, and yet being Indispensably obliged to it; or from the want of Unanimity and good Order amongst Christians, if the Authority of Bishops be cramp'd, and confined to Christians as living in certain Districts. No small inconveniences may seem to spring out of Christians being indis-

pensably

penfably obliged, in order to Salvation, to believe in one Diftrict, what is contradictory, to what Chriftians in another Diftrict are in order to their Salvation, as indifpenfably obliged to believe. And yet can the Chriftians in neither one, nor other of the Diftricts, give any other account why they are to believe at that rate, but that the *Bifhops* of thofe Diftricts have judged for them, and fay they muft believe fo. Thefe are Difficulties, thefe are things that have no good coherence. But then they are to be folved, the Differences are to be reconciled, by them, who veft the Office with that unlimited Power, otherwife they will find their own Invention desperately clog'd.

§. XII. If this Authority be not effential to the Office, but fhall be faid to be a privilege belonging to the major part agreeing, when they afsemble with a purpofe to determine what the meaning of the Holy Ghoft was in fuch a part of the New Testament, or concerning fuch a Subject, treated of in the New Testament; It will not readily appear to unprejudiced People, that the Major part of an Afsembly when gained by Caballing, and very indirect Methods (as has undeniably been fometimes) to decree, that fuch a Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghoft, has Authority from Chrift to oblige his Subjects *indifpenfably* in order to their Salvation, to believe upon their Word, that what they fay was the meaning of the Holy Ghoft, was fo.

§. XIII. But I own the Holy Ghoft can reveal to the greater part of an Afsembly, yea, to every one of the Afsembly, what his meaning

ing was, in any part of that Revelation, the Apostles received from Him, so as to assure every one of them, that the Revelation is from him, and that he doth not reveal it singly to him, but to every one in the Assembly. In this case, they would all agree in that, which was infallibly the meaning of the Holy Ghost; They would every one of them be infallibly certain that they all received it by immediate Revelation. Now supposing the Holy Ghost should proceed thus far with them, this would not vest them with Authority, to oblige all other Christians, or any one Christian, indispensably in order to their or his Salvation, to believe on their Word, that what they said was the meaning of the Holy Ghost was so. It would be a Daring, and Damnable presumption (perhaps not unpardonable) if they should assume such Authority to themselves on that account. For all this, would amount to no more, than an extraordinary Grace vouchsafed to every one of them particularly, for their own personal assurance of what was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there, or about that matter, and their mutual Satisfaction that the same Favour was granted to every one of them. It is undoubtedly the Duty of every one of them to believe, and rest assured, that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost. But their saying that was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, in such a part, or parts of the New Testament, and that they know it was so by immediate Revelation from the Holy Ghost, will not make it the Duty of any other Christian to believe it. This Revelation to them, was not intended by the Holy Ghost for other Peoples Satisfaction in the matter.

ter. If he had revealed it to them, that others should be obliged to receive it, should be bound indispensably to believe it to have been his meaning, or that they received it immediately from him, when they declare it, He would have proceeded some steps further, and would have furnished them with such Credentials, as should be proper to convince and satisfy others, that He did reveal it to them. And when they produce those Credentials, others will be obliged to believe it, not as their Interpretation, nor on their Authority, but on Christ's Authority, and as a part of his Revelation given immediately by the Holy Ghost: Christ can bestow Infallibility on one Man, or on a Number of Men, but his doing that, will not vest him or them, with a Power, or Authority, to oblige others indispensably to believe what they say was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, was so, merely because they do say it. His or their Infallibility, must be divinely attested, otherwise it is of service only to themselves, and lays no Obligation to believe, on any but themselves. It is External Divine Attestation, to communicated Infallibility, that invests him, to whom it is imparted, with Authority, to oblige others to believe, He declares the meaning of the Holy Ghost by immediate Revelation, when He saith He doth so.

§. XIV. But Immediate Revelation from the Holy Ghost is not much expected now, by those who Assemble to make Decisions, which they would have Christians to submit to, upon their pretended Authority, and bare Word, as indispensably necessary to their Salvation; much less is Divine Attestation, which is indis-

penfably neceffary by way of Evidence, to oblige any one to affent, to what another declares is the Mind of the Holy Ghost which he actually received by immediate Revelation from the Holy Ghost. Should fuch things be granted now to Church Councils; they would quite fpoil the great Design, which has been carrying on in fome parts of the World. fuch Affemblies would be very frightful to fome People, when Men fhould by immediate order from Chrift, denounce the fentence of Condemnation, upon the Decrees of multiplied Councils, which have been Zealoufly Executed by Fire and Sword; and upon things, moft admired and depended on, by their whole Former Party; and then fhould work uncontrovertible Miracles, to the utter confufion of thofe Notions, and Practices, they themfelves had pretended to confecrate, had zealoufly efponfed, and endeavoured to defend with unchristian and inhuman Violence; And to the entire Demolition, and Ruine, of what has been moft induftrioufly maintained, artfully guarded, and forcibly propagated a long time.

§. XV. If the greater Number, or every one in an Affembly, are really governed by Arguments and Reasons, and agree from the ftrength of Argument, that fuch a Senfe, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost in fuch a part of the New Testament; Their Determinations will be founded, on their perceiving greater degrees of Evidence, that that Senfe was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there, than they perceive that any other Senfe was his meaning there; And they will act like good Chriftians in believing that that Senfe was the meaning

meaning of the Holy Ghost there. Yet their perceiving ever such strong and certain Evidence, that that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there, will not vest them with Authority, will not justify their claiming an Authority from Christ, to oblige other Christians in order to their Acceptance with God, and to their Eternal Salvation, to believe on their bare Word, that that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there. All they can in Reason, and with any Right expect from other Christians is, that upon their saying, they perceive greater degrees of Evidence that that Sense, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, than they perceive that any other Sense was his meaning there; They acknowledge, that they do well in believing that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost there, and that they are disposed and ready to believe it to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, when they shall perceive greater degrees of Evidence that that Sense was his meaning, than that any other Sense was his meaning there, or that they do believe, the very same thing they do, not meerly because they say that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, but because they perceive such Evidence, as doth oblige them to believe it. But no Christian can be obliged to believe their Interpretation, was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, meerly because they say it was. A Christian cannot rationally believe an Interpretation is the meaning of the Holy Ghost, unless he perceive Evidence proper to induce him to believe it: Assent, or belief must be founded on a Person's own perceiving of Evidence. A Christian cannot believe an Interpretation contains the meaning of the Holy Ghost,

Ghost, by one or more Person's perceiving Evidence, that it expresseth the meaning of the Holy Ghost. If one, or many can perceive Evidence for other Christians, they may assent and believe for them. And then there will be no need of understanding and Faith in any, but those who will undertake to understand and believe for all the rest. Was a Conjecture to be framed by the carriage of the generality of the populace in some Countries, one would be inclined to suspect, They and their Priests, had made an agreement, that their Priests should believe for them, and they to return the kindness, would bellow, and roar, and swear, and drink, for, or against, whatever Sounds they will give them, and exactly according to their orders. But whatever agreements People may make with one another, It is most certain Men must believe for themselves in order to Salvation. And let any Man consider, whether it is not as impossible for God to vest any one Man, or more Men with Authority, to oblige People to assent to the truth of Propositions, without their perceiving Evidence that they are true, as it is to make a Creature Reasonable, and not Reasonable at the same time?

§. XVI. Every Christian of what rank and order soever, must as to matters relating to Salvation, believe for himself, whatsoever is proposed to be an object of his Faith, He can rationally set to it as true, without perceiving some rational Evidence that it is true, He cannot assent to it, as a truth that concerns him as a Christian, without perceiving such Evidence that it is a truth, to which that Character belongs. He cannot assent to any Interpretation of

of a part of the New Testament, as containing the meaning of the Holy Ghost there, without perceiving some rational Evidence that it doth express the meaning of the Holy Ghost there. Thorough the power of wrong Education, and ill Custom, many take that to be Evidence of the truth of numerous Propositions, which is no Evidence at all of their Truth, and thus they very often assent, and very strongly, to the truth of very important Doctrines, because they apprehend they perceive Evidence of their being true. But that they do this way assent to important Truths, is perfectly accidental. People will the same way, as, or more, easily be fixed in the belief of the most dangerous untruths, the most Pernicious and Hurtful Notions, Opinions, and Practices. Christians, cannot as Christians, assent at this Rate; Their Assent and Belief as to what concerns their Salvation must be rational. They are with all Sedulity to be cautioned against assenting, without perceiving rational Evidence of the truth of what is proposed to their belief. They must make it their great care, and take much heed they be not deceived, and particularly, that they do not entertain any thing as a part of their Religion, upon trust. No Proposition, the proof of which relies upon rational Evidence, is true, because one Man, or more Men do say it is true. Nor doth his or their saying it is True, in any manner discover, that the Ideas signified by the parts of the Proposition have any sort of Connection. Can his or their saying it is true, then, be a rational Evidence that it is true? Can any Man be obliged to believe it is true, meerly because He, or They, do affirm it is true? When that Affirmation

firmation, affects not, discovers not its truth at all, but notwithstanding that Affirmation it may be most false?

§. XVII. A pretence to Infallibility has been set up, and strangely submitted to, thorough a great part of the Christian World; to the greatly enriching of some, to the impoverishing of many more, to the murdering of Multitudes of eminently good Christians, and to the unexpressible detriment of the Christian Religion. Attempts have been made to reduce Christians to a blind Submission, and slavish Profession of Believing upon bare Words, what those shall say they must believe, who do not openly lay any claim to Infallibility; who are certainly Fallible, as well as others, and perhaps under stronger temptations either to judge, or to declare amiss than some others may be. Is this the Stratagem, which must take, and prevail in this Age of the World? It is the plain and sure way to extirpate Religion, destroy Reason, and root out all that is Honourable and Good. The Herds of meer *Hear say Christians* in many Places, appear so great; one would hope no Man who has any Sense of Christianity at all, would desire, or concern himself that their Numbers may be increas'd.

§. XVIII. If those who undertake to Interpret parts of the New Testament Magisterially, and to frame Decisions in matters of Religion, to oblige Christians to believe them, would be pleased to produce the Reasons, which induce them to think their Interpretations express the Mind of the Holy Ghost, and that their
Decisions

Decisions do declare his meaning, Christians would be obliged to consider them as impartially as they can, and they might then expect, that they will operate on, and prevail with Christians, according to the Evidence they shall perceive them to have for the purposes they are intended. Those Christians, who shall thereby perceive more Evidences, that what they declare was the meaning of the Holy Ghost was so, than they perceive that any other Sense was his meaning, will believe that Sense was the meaning of the Holy Ghost, which they say was his meaning. And in believing that to be his meaning, they will act as good Christians ought to act. Their Faith will be rational, they will be able to give a good and rational account of their Belief, and of their Practice pursuant to it. They will not then blindly submit their Faith or Profession; they will not groundlessly assent, or say they do assent to the truth of Propositions, of the truth of which they do not perceive any rational Evidence, but their Perswasion will be founded on and guided by Reason. And thus every Subject of Jesus Christ ought to govern himself.

§. XIX. There is scarce any thing more unworthy of People professing themselves Christians, than professing to believe that Propositions of Men's framing, do express the meaning of the Holy Ghost, without perceiving any Evidence to warrant their believing, that they do express his meaning, except assuming an Authority to oblige them to do so. Can Christians believing and practising meerly upon Hear say, can their complying with, countenancing,

tenancing, and supporting an unreasonable claim of Authority over the Consciences of Christ's Subjects, to oblige them to believe without Evidence, in matters of Eternal Consequence and moment, consist with their approving themselves the Subjects of Christ? Who are in so many Words bound down by Himself, to call no Man (in these matters) their Father upon the Earth? And who assures them, *one is their Master even Christ?* whatever Powers, any may succeed the Apostles in, it is most certain, none can be their Successors, in Power, which they never had, never laid any claim to. They never expected, never required either Idolaters, or Jews, or Profelytes, to believe any thing they proposed to their belief, without laying before them substantial Evidence of the truth of what they proposed to them, which Evidence they were to weigh and consider. And when they did so, they commended and applauded them for their doing it. Nor did they pretend to oblige Christians to believe any thing they said, further than the Credentials they produced that they were Christ's Apostles, and immediately instructed by the Holy Ghost, did warrant and oblige them to believe. They detested the thought of arrogating a Power to oblige Christians to believe any thing in Religion, upon their bare Word, and without Evidence. *Not for that we have dominion over your Faith.*

§. XX. The Gospel Revelation was not intended for Brutes, but for those who are endowed with Reason, and who are obliged to exercise their Reason, in order to their finding out

but the meaning of the Holy Ghost, in whatsoever they can be concerned to believe, and practise, in order to their Eternal Salvation. They cannot be obliged to believe any Sense of any part of the New Testament, to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost there, but by perceiving Evidence that it was his meaning there. What is called Implicit Faith in this matter, has no countenance at all in the New Testament, where Christians are commanded to *try all things*. Implicit Faith, or unreasonable Submission, was the Device of Proud, Assuming, Arrogant, Ill Meaning, and Self Designing Men. And most pernicious Effects have flow'd from it, where ever it has prevailed; and none but such, can be expected in reason from it, as long as those who profess themselves Christians, shall subject themselves to it. Do those behave like the Subjects of Christ, who profess to believe and practise in matters of Religion, what Men tell them they must believe and do, as from Christ, and in order to Salvation, without enquiring after, and perceiving Evidence, that Christ hath taught those Doctrines, and commanded those practices? There can be no Authority, to which, Christians, as Christians, can be obliged to submit, but Christ's, if he be their only Lord. And they cannot believe or practise in real Submission to his Authority, unless they perceive Evidence, that He has taught what they believe, and has ordered what they practise, and both believe, and practise for this very reason, because they perceive, that his Authority doth oblige them to the one, and the other: If they believe and practise, purely upon any other Authority, in order to their Salvation,

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vation,

vation, they are to expect Salvation, not from Christ, whose Authority they do not perceive concerned in those matters, but from them, to whose Authority they do submit.

§. XXI. The Apostles, by the Infallible guidance and assistance of the Holy Ghost, have fully delivered in the New Testament the Mind of God. It is the Duty of Christians to make that Revelation their Study, that they may learn from thence, what they, as Christians, are to Believe, and do, and to hold fast, and contend earnestly for the Faith there delivered, and practise diligently what they find there made their Duty. Integrity, Diligence, and hearty renewed Prayer, do better dispose any Man, for the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, along with his own Revelation already given, than the greatest measures of Humane Learning, the most pompous Humane Characters, and the most extended worldly Powers and Dignities do. These latter, it is very well known have been separated from the former, and may be again; but the former were never known to fail, with respect to what was indispensably necessary to such Peoples Salvation. Let People bring honest Minds to these Sacred Records, be serious, hearty, and impartial in their search after the meaning of the Holy Ghost, conscientious and unreserved in their Submission to him, constant and earnest in their Prayers for his Assistance, they may upon good ground expect Light, and Help, and Comfort, Grace at present, and everlasting Salvation hereafter.

§. XXII.

§. XXII. It cannot be expected, considering the State and Circumstances of good Christians in this World, but they will have different apprehensions, concerning the Sense and Meaning of the Holy Ghost, in some parts of these Sacred Writings. But these different Sentiments, will not hinder any of them from partaking of Divine Grace, from acceptance with God, from admission into the Kingdom of Heaven, provided they be sincere and honest, and manage themselves towards one another, under their different apprehensions, in that manner, the Apostles have directed, by the order and appointment of that *unerring Spirit, the Holy Ghost*, who taught and instructed them.

§. XXIII. With respect to different, and opposite Interpretations of some parts of these Holy Writings, especially such as be of General and Common concern, there are two very plain and easy Rules, which are within the reach of those Christians who have the meanest Capacities; which, if faithfully observed, will enable them to discern which Interpretation comes nearest to the Mind and Intention of the Holy Ghost. The first Rule is, To get the Mind furnished with a sound Knowledge of the main scope, the great End, and principal Design of the Gospel Revelation. Which, most certainly is, *To teach People to deny ungodly and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World, in expectation of the glorious appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* The second Rule,

Rule, is, to examine Interpretations impartially by, and then judge of them, according as they agree with, or dissent from the chief purpose and intendment of the Gospel, If one Interpretation evidently tends to further People in that, which is the principal business of the Gospel; Another Interpretation countenances such a latitude in Designs and Manners, as cannot consist with the main intent of the Gospel, And a Third Interpretation only serves the Ambition, Pride, Usurpation, Tyranny, and Worldly Interest of a set of Men, in any of the Parties professing the Christian Religion, a plain, honest Man may safely determine that the first Interpretation, comes nearer to the meaning of the Holy Ghost, than either of the other. One who hath any measure of Sobriety and Candour, will readily, and with justice enough conclude, that both the other Interpretations, are more likely to have been suggested by the Prince of the Devils, than to be the meaning of the Holy Ghost, every part of whose *Doctrine is according to Godliness.*

S. XXIV. Tho' the Apostles be dead, The Holy Ghost who instructed them in the Mind and Will of God, and enabled them to leave that Revelation, just as they received it from Him, for the use of People thorough all Generations, doth continue, and will abide, to make his own Revelation effectual, for Conversion, Sanctification, and Salvation to them, who shall do their parts in making use of it for those purposes. And this, after the same manner, He did make

make effectual to those purposes, in them who heard it from the Apostles themselves. The Converting, Sanctifying, and Saving Power and Efficacy, of this Revelation, when published to People by the Apostles, did not proceed from any Virtue or Power inherent in the Apostles themselves, but from the Power of the Holy Ghost. He made his own Revelation, to produce those good Effects in them, who in those Days, hearkened to the Apostles, and applied themselves to make that use of, what they taught, which, upon conviction, it appeared in Reason, they ought to make of it. The Apostles were not vested with a Power, to make the Doctrine they received from the Holy Ghost, have a transforming and saving Efficacy on those who heard them. That Virtue came from the Holy Ghost himself, along with his own Revelation. *Whether is Paul, and who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.* The Holy Ghost hath all along, doth still, and will to the End of the World, accompany his own Revelation given to the Apostles, with his Gracious Influences, to those who make that use of it they ought. *Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All Power is given unto me, in Heaven and in Earth. Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, And Lo I am*

am with you alway, even to the End of the World. This Efficacy of the Gospel, to Convert, Sanctify, Strengthen, Comfort, and save People, depends on a Power perfectly distinct, and separate from what is inherent in any Human Person, or annexed to any Office Man can be intrusted with. It belongs intirely to the Holy Ghost, who never fails to exert it, with his own Revelation, in such measures as he sees proper, to those Individual Persons, who faithfully do their part, in making use of this Revelation, that it's intended effects may be produced in them.

§. XXV. The Holy Ghost instructed the Apostles what they were to publish to the World. The Apostle's Office was to declare faithfully to the World, what the Holy Ghost taught them. This they did. But they did not convey, or impart a Converting, Sanctifying, and Saving Power, to those who heard them all along with the Doctrines they delivered from the Holy Ghost unto them. 'Tis undeniable in fact, that many who heard them, continued in an unconverted estate. That the Revelation from the Holy Ghost spoken by them, had a transforming Virtue, on, sometimes a greater, and sometimes a smaller Number of them who attended on their Ministry, was from the direct Power of the Holy Ghost accompanying his own Revelation, (when published by the Apostles, who received it immediately from Him) to the Minds, and Hearts of those particular Persons. Thus it

it was then, thus it is now, and thus it will be to the end of the World.

§. XXVI. The Apostles did their parts, they discharged the Office and Trust committed to them, with Diligence, Industry, and Faithfulness. And they failed not of finding Acceptance with their Lord. They did not appropriate to themselves any Authority or Power, which was reserved to the Holy Ghost. If they had done that, instead of Acceptance, it would have subjected them unto Censure, and a very terrible Censure too. They did not pretend to be Lords over Christians Faith, only Helpers of their Joy. And they depended on the Holy Ghost to make his own Revelation, delivered and spoken by them, effectual, by his own Power and Blessing, to those who heard it, as he saw fit.

§. XXVII. Those who pretend they succeed the Apostles in the fulness of Authority which was given to them, or to oblige Christians indispensably to receive their Determinations on their Word, as the certain Meaning of the Holy Ghost, ought to produce such Testimonials from the Holy Ghost, as the Apostles did, to satisfy and assure they did not deliver any thing but what they had received from the Holy Ghost. If those who succeed the Apostles in those Parts of Office, which were not peculiar to them, as Apostles, do claim no other Authority, than they did, in those Parts of Office, and do constantly imitate them, in Diligence, Industry, Patience, and Faithfulness, they may with good Assurance, expect Acceptance with their Lord, and a glorious Reward from

from him, though they employ their Labours amongst a perverse and gain-saying People. If they be faithful in doing their part, (that is as much as is laid upon them, and required at their Hands,) then, they may rejoice, because their Recompence is with their Lord, and their faithful Labour and Pains is a *sweet Savour* to him, notwithstanding to them amongst whom they Labour thorough their own Wilfulness, and many unexcusable Faults, it proves *the Savour of Death, unto Death.*

§. XXVIII. But they must be sure, they do not arrogate any Spiritual Power and Authority, which doth not belong to them, for if they do, they will contract no small Guilt upon themselves. He only can in Truth, and in Propriety of Speech, Authoritatively Absolve from, or give Remission of Sins, who has Power to give Repentance. Those who have not Power and Authority either to confer Divine Graces, or to restrain the Holy Ghost from conferring them, and to oblige him not to bestow them, but according as they shall permit, when, and to whom they shall give their allowance, had need take great care, how they adventure to exclude, or cast People out of Christ's Kingdom, from the Number of Christ's faithful Subjects, because they be not so plying to them in Matters of Religion, as it is their Pleasure they should be. If they serve any thus, whom the Lord Jesus knows are his faithful Subjects, woe unto them. No Name of Office, no Character, no Dignity, no, nor all the Power in the World, will be able to protect them. The Lord Jesus will Rule, He will govern, He will judge, let the Big ones of the World

World be ever so much against it. Let any who make use of his Name, talk as magnificently as they please, of their Authority over the Faith of Christians, and which enables them to do with them as they please, the Lord Jesus will make them know to their Sorrow, that they have no Authority to wrong any faithful Subject of his. He will acknowledge every one of his faithful Subjects before the Angels of God, to the everlasting Shame and Confusion of those, who under a pretence of Absolute Authority in Matters of Religion, have treated any of them so injuriously, except they do in time, thoroughly repent of that most scandalous Impiety.

§ XXIX. Here let me add with respect to the Successors of the Apostles in this Land, They enjoy Lands, and Revenues, which the Apostles never had, nor ever laid any Claim to, and they ought, from the highest to the lowest, to be very thankful for them. If they will thankfully acknowledge their Dependance on the Civil Government, as to all those Immunities, Powers, Privileges, and Emoluments, which are entirely owing to her Liberality, and Munificence, They have the justest Grounds possible to rest assured of the continued Enjoyment of them to themselves, and those who shall succeed them. But if they will pretend a Right to them, Independent on the Civil Government, and to support, justify, and strengthen that unrighteous Claim, will enter into a Confederacy with ill-affected Persons, to excite and raise, and encourage Mobs, Mutinies, and Rebellions, in confidence of the mighty Numbers that will assist them, one of the worst

E Characters,

Letters of
Count
Gyllen-
berg, &c.
pag. 3.

pag. 4.

Characters fastened in Holy Writ on those who were most enormously Bad, will most Rightfully belong to them, *viz. wicked Transgressors*, and how much Bitterness will spring from the Attempt, and accompany the Prosecution of it, surpasses all I can express. That elaborate States-man, Count Gyllenberg, (who had provided sixty Pounds worth of Reasons, or something else to print, in order to create or further Disturbances here, which he styles, *undoing the Nation*;) certifies his correspondent Baron Gortz, that in this Land, or Country, *Nine, in Ten, are Rebels*. Whether the great and knowing Men, who gave him this Information, included the Clergy in this Number, is not said, nor doth it appear they did except them. If the Rebels be so many, as was boasted, to encourage an Invasion, they may when they have an opportunity, do a great deal of Mischief. But they wretchedly deceive themselves, if they think their Numbers will obtain them what they principally aim at. For the Lord Almighty is against them, on many Accounts, and particularly, as they are *Rebels*. I think it no small Encouragement to all who have any Acquaintance with the Christian Religion, to rest assured, that God will in due time, notwithstanding all the Machinations and Efforts of ill People, bring Matters in this Land to an happy Issue, because none are against our most Excellent Sovereign King *GEORGE*, and the Protestant Succession, but who are also against the Lord Jesus Christ being sole King in his own Kingdom, and consequently against his being sole Law-giver to, and Judge of his own Subjects, in Matters of Conscience, and which relate to their Eternal Salvation. *Why do the beathen*

beaten rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? He that sitteth in the heaven, shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision, He will vex them in his sore displeasure. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces, like a potters vessel. Be the Rebels more than was boasted, and let their Cunning, and Falshood, and Power, be exerted to the utmost, 'tis probable there are those now living, and who be not at present very well minded, who will find themselves obliged to say, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily he is a God who judgeth in the earth.* The Rebels will not agree that this is True. They will take their Course, whenever they think they can begin safely. *God will wound the head of his Enemies,* whether they will believe it or not, and when they feel, they will know the Truth of what they would not believe.

§. XXX. But what I am now coming to say, is acknowledged, by every Protestant in the World, *viz.* That all Christ's Subjects have the very same Revelation of the mind of their Lord to govern themselves by. As his Subjects and Christians they can be obliged by no Laws but Christ's. As they are Subjects to others, they have so far, their Laws to govern themselves by. In these Cases, they are under different Characters, and under different Relations, which are on no Account to be jumbled and confounded together, but to be constantly kept separate, and distinct. No difference of Stations, and Characters amongst Christians, exempts any of them, from that which is common to every one of them, as Christians, which

is, to be Subject to Christ alone, and to be governed entirely by his Laws.

§. XXXI. Those who be to preach to, and instruct others (the Clergy) have the Writings inspired by the Holy Ghost to conform their publick Discourses, and more private Instructions unto. And they ought to make it their most serious care, not to deliver any thing to their Hearers in Christ's Name, and as a part of his Religion, but what they perceive they have very good warrant for, in that Revelation the Holy Ghost gave of the Will of God to the Apostles. Those who hear (the Laity) have the very same divinely inspired Writings, by which they ought strictly to examine every thing the Clergy profess by Virtue of their Office, to deliver to them. They ought every one of them to attend very diligently, and to be very strict, exact, and impartial in examining every particular the Clergy teach as a part of the Christian Religion, by the New Testament, and faithfully entertain whatever they find warranted there. If they have any Love to their own Souls, any concern for their own Eternal Salvation, they must be sure, not to entertain any Clergyman's, any Man's, or any Body of Men's Interpretations, or Determinations, instead of Scripture, any Doctrine, as a Scripture-Doctrine, without plain Scripture-Proof that it is so, nor assent to any Interpretation of Scripture, as the meaning of the Holy Ghost, without perceiving greater Evidence, that it was his meaning, than they perceive that any other Sense was his meaning. Whatever they hear taught is a part of the Christian Religion, and upon strict Examination by the New Testament,

Testament, they find it so, they are indispensably obliged to receive upon the Testimony of the Holy Ghost, with all firmness of Faith, and to endeavour in good earnest, to improve it, to all those good Purposes for which it is intended. This is the certain way to be safe. Both Teachers and Hearers ought to be very diligent, and faithful in doing their own parts. And if they be not, whatever flourish they may on either Hand make in the World, they will have a very sad Account to give at last. It is not a Minister's fondness for any thing, which will excuse his laying aside, what the Holy Ghost hath taught, that He may entertain his Auditory, with something that he likes better. Nor will Sloth, and Negligence, or foolish Credulity excuse Hearers, if they receive any thing for a part of the Christian Religion, which the Holy Ghost hath not Authorized. They may Both of them, very justly, expect to fall under the censure of the great Lord of all, The latter for their Remissness and Unfaithfulness to their own Souls; And the former, for their Falseness and Unfaithfulness to their Office.

§. XXXI. The Holy Ghost doth not by his Revelation countenance Sloth and Idleness in any, but requires Caution, impartial Examination, and Diligence in every one. He proposeth to every one proper Aims, he directs to proper Means, he enjoyns Attention, Consideration, and Diligence in using the means he appoints, in dependance on him, for his Assistance and Blessing, and mightily encourages all this, by promising his aid. He enlightens their Minds, and opens their Hearts, who are truly desirous to know Divine Truths, are attentive to the Instructions,

Instructions he hath given, and do seriously consider the things he hath proposed, and doth recommend unto them. He enables them who are meek, and tractable, submissive, and diligent in using the means He orders, *To walk in the way of the Lord*, and to do, what, without his gracious Assistance, they would not be able to perform with Success. He makes their honest Endeavours in their using the means He hath instituted, to be prosperous, so that their Services find Acceptance with God, and they reap much Benefit and Advantage, Light, Strength, and Peace. To these, He accompanies his own Revelation, with his Power and gracious Influences, and causeth it to have an enlightening changing, cleansing, sanctifying, strengthening, and comforting Efficacy in proportion to their various Cases, and Wants.

§. XXXII. But if People will put out their own Eyes, or suffer others to Hoodwink them; will satisfy themselves with what is called implicit Faith, and what is in Truth brutal Obedience, will indulge to Sloth, and Idleness, and vile Lusts, there is no help for them. If they will surrender themselves resolvedly to blind Guides, or to them, who are no other to them than blind Guides, they must fall and perish, and for no other Reason, but because they and their Guides will have it so. There is no Remedy provided for Absolute Perverseness, and Obstinacy, and wilful Resolvedness in People, not to do what pertains unto them in order to their own Safety and Good. The Holy Ghost is not promised to force People, to Learn, and to Change, and save them, in a violent Contradiction to their own fixed Purposes, Resolutions, and Wills. He will teach,
and

and guide People into all Truth that concerns them, he will lead and help them in all their Duties, and will conduct them safely to Glory, if they will hearken, attend, and learn, if they will submit, follow, strive in Dependence on him, and be Obedient ; If they will neither be Slaves to Men, nor Untractable and Refractory towards Him.

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and guide People into all Truth that concerns
them, he will lead and help them in all their
Duties, and will conduct them safely to Glory,
if they will hearken, attend, and learn; if they
will rebel, follow, live in Rebellion on
him, and be Obdient; if they will neither be
Slaves to Men, nor Untractable and Reluctant
towards him.

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